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IN THE SOUTHERN FIELD OF FOLK-LORE.

THE effort to extend folk-lore investigations in the South will no doubt bear valuable fruit, but the work is going to be somewhat slow and difficult, I fear.

The importance of the material is not sufficiently appreciated, even among cultured people. If they can be made to understand that the folk-lore of a people is part of the history of that people, they will doubtless awaken to active appreciation.

The publication, some months since, in this Journal, of an article entitled "Some Mountain Superstitions of the South," brought to me several contributions of folk-lore, and from them I have selected the following.

Mr. William T. Howard, of Lancing, Tenn., was reared in the Cumberland Mountains. I know him as a reliable man. He writes that some years since, while collecting for a sewing-machine company, he passed three days at the home of a Mr. Massengale, in Scott County. Mr. Massengale was then about eighty years of age, but was as physically and mentally vigorous as most men in middle life. He was a strong believer in witchcraft, and some of the stories which he related Mr. Howard has given me in the old gentleman's own language, as nearly as he can recall it.

A BEWITCHED GUN.

"For many years," said he, "I made my living by hunting, and many deer, bear, turkeys, and all sorts of varmints to be found in these mountings, have I killed.

"I was considered a powerful good shot with a rifle, and that I certainly was.

"One morning, howsom'ever, I went out, and the first thing I knew I had a fine shot at a big deer, which was standing stock-still, broadside toward me. I raised my gun, took good aim, and expected of course to drop him dead in his tracks. But I missed him, point blank. He made a few jumps and then stood stock-still until I had wasted three shots on him, and had n't cut a hair. Then he ran off.

"This sort of thing went on for several days. I had lots of powerful fine close shots, but could n't hit a thing.

"I told my wife that there was something awful wrong, either with me or with the gun. She told me I had better go to the witch-doctor, as it was likely my gun was bewitched.

"I went to the witch-doctor, who told me to go into the woods near a certain house, pick out a tree, and name it after the woman

who lived there. He said she was a witch, and had bewitched my gun. He said after I had named the tree as he directed I must shoot at it, and listen to see if there was any noise made at the house—for if I hit the tree the witch would be hurt, and then my gun would be all right.

"I did as he said, and at the first crack of the gun I heard the woman cry out, as if she had been hit instead of the tree. I went to the tree and found that it was hit. From that time on my gun was as good as ever, and my shooting was as reliable as it had ever been."

This same old man told Mr. Howard a story of

A BEWITCHED CHURNING.

"I was working for a man," he said, "whose wife was regarded as a witch. One day I saw her put a very small quantity of milk into the churn and go to churning. There was not over a teacupful, or such a matter, of it. But after a while I saw her put some white powder into it. She got a big lot of butter. I noticed where she put the powder, and the first chance that I got I stole some of it and went home.

"I asked mother to let me have some milk. She thought I wanted it to drink, and gave it to me. But I put it in the churn, put in some of the powder, and I got more butter than she usually got from a whole churnful of milk.

"On my way back to the farm where I worked I met a very small, dark-haired, red-complected man, that I had never seen before. He said to me, 'You have used some of my material, and now you must put your name in my book.'

"I asked him what he meant, and he said I had made butter with his material, and I'd got to put my name down in his book. I hated like the mischief to do it, but was afraid of him, and decided to do what he said. So, following his directions, I scratched my arm until the blood came, and with it I wrote my name in a little book which he handed to me. He then went away, seeming to feel satisfied, and I have never seen him since."

The old man told Mr. Howard that the witches had several times turned him into a horse and ridden him off to their night frolics.

He could remember distinctly looking at himself and thinking with pride what a fine horse he was.

He said that on one of these occasions they rode him through a lot of brier-bushes, and the next morning his hands were full of briars.

He also claimed to have learned the secrets of witchcraft, and declared that he could do anything with Mr. Howard that he pleased by simply thinking it, and offered to demonstrate his ability to do so by practical experiments.

But Mr. Howard frankly confesses that he has sufficient superstition in his nature to have inspired him with fear of the old man, and he begged him not to experiment upon him.

His host assured him that he could feel perfectly easy in his mind, as he would do nothing against the will of his guest.

Mr. Howard says that the old man's manner throughout these recitals was such as to inspire the belief that he was deeply in earnest in all that he related.

THE MYSTERIOUS DEER.

There is quite a prevalent belief among mountaineers in the existence of a mysterious deer, of which they stand in no inconsiderable awe. I have heard of a hunter in upper East Tennessee, who claims to have shot at this deer, or one of these deer, under a misapprehension. The bullet came back and lodged in his own leg, and he shows the scar in apparent confidence that the evidence is conclusive.

Dr. A. S. Wiltse, who has for many years practised his profession in the Cumberland Mountains, and who takes a deep interest in the mountain people and their peculiarities, writes me this version of the deer myth, secured from a celebrated hunter named Jackson Howard. The language of the original relator is reproduced as nearly as practicable:—

"El Moore is a good hunter, and a splendid good shot, too. But he got into a streak o' mighty ornery luck one time jes' on ercount er one er them thar white deer. He tole me all erbout hit with 'is own lips, an' El is a mighty truthful man.

"He said he war out a' huntin' one mornin', an' he come onter a white deer, an' hit war not more 'n fifteen er twenty feet frum 'im.

"He fired at hit, but never toch a hair. That deer jes' stood still untwel he'd a-wasted seven or eight shots on hit. Then hit run off, an' he tried his gun on a spot in a tree, an' the bullet went straight to ther mark.

"He got his dander up then, an' laid fer thet white deer, an' he wasted a powerful lot more ammunition on hit, untwel fin'ly 'e plugged hit in ther shoulder.

"But he was mighty sorry fer that, right then an' for a long time atterwards. He said hit made the sorrowfulest noise 'at he ever hearn in all of his life. An' from that day twelvemonth hit war impossible fer El ter kill any kind of er deer whatsoever. He could kill other kinds of varmints all right ernough, but kill a deer he could n't."

A HOODOO CHARM.

Mr. S. P. Gardner, who was reared in Louisiana, has furnished me a fine collection of the superstitions of that section. For the present I shall give only a recipe for making a hoodoo or voodoo charm:—

“Take a dried one-eyed toad, a dried lizard, the little finger of a person who committed suicide, the wings of a bat, the eyes of a cat, the liver of an owl, and reduce all to a powder. Then cut up into fine pieces a lock of hair from the head of a dead (natural) child, and mix it with the powder. Make a bag of a piece of sheet that has been used as a shroud, put all of the material into it and put it into the pillow of the intended victim, when nobody is aware of your action. He will pine away and die. A few feathers run through the bag will expedite matters.”

Henry M. Wiltse.

CHATTANOOGA, TENN.